

Japanese Assail Films On Viet-Nam Atrocities

By Arthur J. Dommen
Los Angeles Times

TOKYO, May 23—A Japanese television network has canceled a series of documentary films about the war in Viet-Nam because of a deluge of protests from viewers that certain sequences showed brutality beyond the limits of public decency.

The films, made by six staffers of the Nippon Television Network Corp. (NTV) of Tokyo and screened at a late hour throughout the nation under the title "Record of a South Vietnamese Marine Battalion," show such gory happenings as the execution of a 17-year-old youth suspected of aiding the Viet Cong and a soldier carrying the severed head of another Viet Cong.

Cabinet Aide Protests

The Japanese feel they have witnessed enough brutality for one generation at least, and a tacit understanding among rival newspapers has banned the printing of shocking photographs.

Among those who felt compelled to make their views

known was Tomisaburo Hashimoto, chief Cabinet secretary to Premier Eisaku Sato, who told NTV president Soshichiro Shimizu that he was doubtful of the motive behind the telecast.

The screened portion of the documentary, the first of three parts originally scheduled to be shown on consecutive Sundays, opens with a unit of Vietnamese marines moving cautiously through paddy fields. They warily approach a village, obviously suspected to be a Viet Cong village, which appears completely deserted.

A private in camouflage uniform fires a few rounds from his carbine in the direction of the cluster of white-walled houses to attract attention. A number of women and children emerge on scene, and there is nothing faked about their timidity.

Farmer Asks Mercy

They are questioned under the supervision of the unit commander, a burly veteran with a double paunch who has a predilection for stripping to his undershorts during the brief interludes in the march and who is not averse to the use of a cane whip. Subsequent scenes show the Marines interrogating Viet Cong suspects, young men tied to a tree in the shady front yards of the houses.

An old farmer pleads for mercy, showing one hand with several fingers missing.

The scene shifts abruptly to the pathway leading past a grove of banana trees out of the village. As the troops head out across the silent paddy fields toward the hostile jungle in the background, they delicately negotiate an exposed Viet Cong pit-trap lined with sharp spikes.

The final scenes, responsible for most of the clamor among viewers, show a soldier smashing his rifle butt into a figure sprawled in the pathway, apparently an executed suspect. Other soldiers look on, and one moves forward to cut a trophy from the body with a knife.

Lastly, a soldier appears carrying in one hand what is clearly a freshly severed head. He dumps it nonchalantly in the middle of the path, perhaps as a warning to future Viet Cong sympathizers.

The unit trudges wearily onward. The film comes to a close.

U.S. Newsmen Given Unverified Reports

Los Angeles Times

SAIGON, May 23—The U.S. Information Service here is attempting to push undocumented guerrilla atrocity reports on reporters.

The attempt to enlist correspondents in the psychological warfare offensive is being made, at least partially, at the behest of Sen. Thomas Dodd (D-Conn.). He was disturbed, he has since declared in speeches, that correspondents were not conveying "a balanced or representative picture" of the war in Viet-Nam.

In the daily printed summary of the war, the American high command now is listing "examples of recently reported outrages."

When correspondents seek further details from American sources they are told the reports are unverified and that the Vietnamese are not interested in following up on reporters themselves are advised to follow up the reports.